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**A comparative study of Somali immigrants in Minnesota and Norway,  
a critical response to the book “The Immigrants’ Superpower” by  
Gerhard Helskog.**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is a literature review, comparing research concerning Somali immigrants in Minnesota and Norway. The starting point for the comparison is the critique of Norwegian integration policies and welfare policies in general, as described by the Norwegian journalist Gerhard Helskog in his book “The Immigrants’ Superpower” (2008). Helskog claims that immigrants in the US more successfully integrate, mainly because of the strong work requirements for newly arrived immigrants, tied to the limited welfare policies. By comparing research from the two societies, I aim to evaluate Helskog’s theories, particularly in the case of Somali immigrants. I have divided my findings into three main categories, describing the integration processes on different levels: strategies used by immigrants, strategies used by governments, and overall structural factors which influence the immigration processes.

I find the groups of Somali immigrants in the two societies to be similar when it comes to characteristics like family-structure and education, but also related to strategies used to meet the challenges of the settlement processes. Maintaining religion and strong family ties, remittance sending to family and friends and clustering of populations in the main cities are some of the strategies used. How social capital is utilized differs to some extent between the two societies. The strategies used by governments for integrating the immigrants differ when it comes to duration, content and who is providing the services. The Norwegian Introductory Program lasts for two years, while the Refugee Cash Assistance Program in Minnesota is limited to eight months. The emphasis on language skills in the Norwegian program provides a different starting point for the Somali immigrants in Norway compared to those in Minnesota. But the labour market opportunities for the group are better in Minnesota, both because of the food processing industry and the Somalis own businesses, leaving the Somali immigrants in Minnesota with higher employment rates. Stigmatizing of the group based on skin colour and religion are obstacles that need to be overcome in both societies. However, the example of unusually high employment rates among Somali immigrants in Hammerfest, Norway, shows that whenever works are available, also for immigrants with lower education and scarce language skills, the Somali immigrants in both societies integrate seemingly well into the labour market.

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# 1. Introduction

Somali immigrants in Norway form one of the largest immigrant groups in the society. Challenges regarding integration of this particular group have been the subject of public debate during the last few years. Somali immigrants have the lowest employment rates among immigrants and score low on measures for quality of life and wellbeing in Norway (Fangen 2008, 37). The group is often used as an example in media to criticize Norwegian immigration politics. In contrast to this, during the previous two years success-stories of Somali immigrants in the American state of Minnesota have been described in the Norwegian media; at the same time as the Norwegian policies for integrating immigrants have been criticized for not meeting the needs of Somalis and other immigrant groups.

One of the contributions to the public debate about Somali immigrants in Norway is the book “The immigrants’ superpower” (2008) by the Norwegian journalist Gerhard Helskog. The author examines immigrant’s experiences in the US, and uses example stories to criticize the Norwegian integration policies and welfare system. Helskog describes how immigrants in the US face expectations to find work quickly, because economic support from the government is more limited than in the Norwegian welfare state. He describes the Norwegian system, with more extensive welfare policies, as a problem for immigrants and refugees. One of his accusations is that they are forced into a passive role as welfare recipients in Norway. He uses examples of successful American immigrant’s stories to prove his points, some of these being Somali immigrants in Minnesota. Helskog claims that in the American system it is “swim or sink”, and that the immigrants successfully “swim”. He does not deny that there are hardship and low wages among immigrants in the US, but he is clear in his recommendation to choose this over the Norwegian welfare policies.

In this thesis I will take a critical look at issues debated by Helskog in his book. I aim to explore to what extent the integration processes for a Somali immigrant really is as different as Helskog describes, depending on whether he or she immigrated to Minnesota, or to Norway. Also I want to address the critique of the Norwegian welfare system and the question of welfare dependency. Is it true, as Helskog claims, that emphasis on language proficiency before work requirements, as in the Norwegian policies, is negative for integration? Has the Norwegian welfare state got it all wrong?

Helskog does not claim to write a scientific piece of work, but to contribute to an ongoing debate. His work is based on a selection of examples rather than scientific knowledge, it would have benefited on better editing to single out more clearly what his main points are, and it is written in a perhaps too personal style to reach those who do not already agree with his main ideas. As a result, many of his points stand before the reader as a matter of subjective interpretation. By the use of isolated cases one can always choose which side of the story to focus on; but the everyday reality for the people not mentioned in the stories still needs to be uncovered. By doing this literature review I am attempting to explore the issues addressed by Helskog in a scientific manner. This implies that I have approached the topic in a systematic, professional way, as I am describing in chapter 2.

During my initial research I wanted to do a comparison of statistics describing the two societies, to elaborate the comparisons done by Helskog and in the media. However, I found it difficult to obtain comparable statistical data. Also, it became more and more clear to me that comparing qualitative data had many shortcomings. For instance I found that to measure employment rates did not really indicate success of a population group in integrating into a society; related factors like salary, living expenses, working hours, possibilities of promotion, and so on needed to be taken into consideration. This led me to the next stage of my research: what is the reality hidden behind the numbers? I found that I could approach the issues by doing a literature review: by comparing research concerning Somali immigrants in Norway and Minnesota.

I will end this introduction chapter by clarifying my research questions. The main part of my thesis is a presentation and discussion of findings from research, using Helskog's book as a starting point for the focus of each chapter. My findings are sorted into three main categories: strategies used by Somali immigrants, strategies used by governments, and overall structural factors which influence upon the integration processes. In the conclusion part of the thesis I will elaborate how integration processes takes place within the specific contexts of the two societies. I will also directly approach the research questions again to summarise my findings.

Using Helskog's book as the starting point, I divide my research question into three parts:

- To what extent is the picture Helskog describes about Somali immigrants in Norway and in Minnesota recognizable in scientific literature?
- Are there other important issues regarding integration of this particular immigrant group which should be uncovered and addressed in the debate about what is considered successful integration?
- Is Helskog's suggestion for Norway to learn from the US experience relevant when applied to the case of Somali immigrants?

## 2. Methods and theory

In this chapter I will elaborate the methodological approach I have used, clarify some of the concepts and present the literature. I will continue by presenting some necessary background information for the reader: first introducing brief facts about Somalia and the Somali population in Norway and Minnesota, before presenting two integration policies, one from each society.

### 2.1 Choice of methodological approach

First and foremost, my thesis is a *literature review*: I am not collecting first-hand data, but using already existing data to answer my research questions. Another option would be to do a research project by interviewing Somali immigrants in both societies, but due to limited time and means to perform this kind of research I chose to do a literature review. I also find it scientific relevant to systematically go through existing knowledge on the subject from the two societies, and to compare this knowledge, as this has not been done by other researchers. My literature review can be a starting point for myself or others interested in doing further research on the subject. As I will elaborate in a following chapter, my main sources are research reports, books and articles, but I am also using statistics to illustrate some issues of interest. In this extent, my research is mainly *qualitative*, but includes some elements of *quantitative* methods.

Reviewing the scholarly literature, I use the *comparative* method. The *cases* I am comparing are Norway and Minnesota. By comparing two societies I aim to acquire more knowledge about the Somali immigrants in both, but the findings can also be relevant for general questions about integration. I choose to compare a country, Norway, with one of the states in the US, Minnesota. There are several reasons behind my choice of cases: The Somali immigrants in these two societies are subject to discussions about integration in Helskog's book, and in the ongoing media-debate in Norway. Minnesota is the one state in THE US with the highest number of Somali immigrants. For comparing policies I need to look at a specific state in THE US, not the country as a whole, as policies vary from one state to another. As I am Norwegian, Norway is the country I know best, and I am interested in how integration processes work for different immigrant groups in this society. Comparing a nation state to one of the states in a federal republic leaves me with some challenges: to not only look at Minnesota isolated, but to include relevant information about the US as a whole, when needed to complete the picture.

I find that Minnesota and Norway fill the methodological criteria of being similar enough to make a comparison possible, and at the same time different enough to make a comparison interesting. They are both western, industrialized democracies with populations around 5 million. On the other hand, the two societies have deviating histories of migration; they are built on different values and can be classified into two separate welfare regime types (this difference is elaborated by Goff 2010).

I do not expect to discover one single variable that reveals the truth about the differences and similarities between Minnesota and Norway. But I want to have a closer look at the variables and the interrelation between them. My research will in this extent be *exploratory*. I do not expect to uncover explanations, but I want to explore variables which can influence the research questions. As I aim to write a critical response to Helskog's book, my research also has elements of *evaluative* research.

The research questions can be approached on *different levels of analysis*. In her master thesis, Jennifer Moore Goff (2010) focuses on the structural differences between the two societies, the Liberal Welfare State in Minnesota vs. the Social Democratic Welfare state in Norway, and how these influence the process of integration. It is a debatable question if it is feasible to compare on a "lower" level, for instance compare policies, if the structural differences of the two societies are the main cause of any varieties related to the research question. After assessing the literature I found that I had to approach the questions from different levels to provide a fulfilling picture of integration processes for Somali immigrants in the two societies. I do this by dividing my findings into three main *analytical categories*, each one described in separate chapters: immigrants' strategies, governments' strategies and structural factors. In the conclusion part I introduce a model that sums up the three categories and the interrelation between them.

## ***2.2 Challenges concerning comparison of statistics***

When comparing statistics concerning Somali immigrants in Minnesota and Norway I faced substantial methodological problems: In Norway there are detailed statistics about Somali immigrants available from Statistics Norway, while in Minnesota the group is for the most part included in the larger statistical category of African Americans. The US Census 2000 are the source



of the most detailed American statistics about the Somalis on country level, and some statistics on state level, but these numbers are now already 10 years old. The census 2010, when published, will show more updated and accurate statistics, thus making this form of comparison scientifically interesting. The validity of the statistics about Somali immigrants in Minnesota is also weakened by the problem that the officially registered number of Somali immigrants residing in the state derives from the estimates of the population (Ronningen 2004, Ronningen 2010).

Other methodological obstacles are differences in the definition of concepts and calculation of groups, for example which age group is included in the workforce. And when Statistics Norway is calculating the population of Somali immigrants in Norway, this group includes both persons who are born abroad of two foreign-born parents and have moved to Norway, *and* their children born in Norway (Statistics Norway). The US government, on the other hand, uses the definition *foreign born*, which does not include children of immigrants, born in US. There are also differences in the way groups within the Somali population are estimated, for example the age-group included in the labour force is not the same in the two societies. Again, these methodological challenges lead me to the conclusion that comparing statistics is not the research method that provides the most accurate and interesting information in this context.

Despite these methodological challenges, I still choose to use some statistical comparisons throughout the thesis, more for introducing questions of interest than for proving points.

### ***2.3 Reflexivity***

Being a Norwegian social worker; the reality of the Norwegian society and its policies are more familiar to me than the American. This can colour my understanding of the issues in the two societies; leaving me with a more in-deep understanding of the Norwegian reality. I have tried to avoid this by using the American literature as the starting point for my analysis. The Norwegian literature was already familiar to me, forming my pre-assumptions about Somali immigrants and integration processes. By first looking closer at the issues raised in the American literature, I was able to challenge my pre-assumptions and examine the Norwegian literature in a more objective and professional manner.

## ***2.4 Primary data***

In my thesis I include primary data, in cases where the data was not available in any literature. This applies to two different issues; the employment rates of Somali immigrants in Hammerfest municipality in Norway, and information about statistics of the Somali population in Minnesota.

In the report “Immigrants in Norwegian Municipalities” Statistic Norway described unusually high employment rates among Somali immigrants in Hammerfest municipality, compared to other municipalities in Norway (Pettersen 2009). I was not able to find any written source about the issue other than newspaper articles, and one small paragraph referring from a summit, in the report “Somalis in Norway” (Ministry of work and inclusion). I contacted Hammerfest municipality’s immigration service office by email, and received an elaborating answer to my question about explanations behind the issue (enclosure 1). The e-mail has some weaknesses regarding reliability: It is written by an individual, and might reflect this person’s subjective opinions. It is written by an employee at a public agency, and might be coloured by a wish to describe the workplace in a favourable manner. On the other side, the data origins from a source working close to the group I am studying, thus being in a position to know, first hand, about the issues described. As I recognize the main points my source describes from newspaper articles and the report mentioned above, I choose to include the e-mail as one of my sources.

Regarding statistics concerning the Somali population in Minnesota, I also had difficulties finding data. The only available statistics I found online was from US Census 2000, and described the Somali immigrants in US, not by state. I contacted Minnesota State Geographic Center by email, and Barbara Ronningen at their office sent me copies of all available statistics from US Census 2000 of Somalis in Minnesota. These statistics can be made available for the reader by contacting Minnesota State Geographic Center. In her email she also confirmed my assumption that there are not any newer detailed statistics available, and she sent me Minnesota State Geographic Center’s newest population estimates for the group in question. Her email is attached as enclosure 2.

## **2.5 Literature**

In the following I briefly describe the process of searching for literature, before I do a summative presentation of the literature included in the thesis.

### **2.5.1 Literature search**

To search for literature I have used Google scholar, Social Services Abstracts, Social Sciences Citation Index, Atekst and Bibsys. I have used the search words Somali AND Minnesota, Somali AND Norway, Minnesota AND Norway, Integration Minnesota, Integration Norway, Integrering Somalier, Somalier OG Norge, and many more. I have also gone through the literature-lists of all relevant books and articles, to identify additional literature that I have not found by internet-search.

### **2.5.2 Literature included in this thesis**

My *data* consists primarily of information written about issues concerning the Somali immigrants in the two societies. The data is found in books, reports, scientific articles and on the websites of public agencies. I have deliberately chosen to not include newspaper articles in my data collection. I consider the debate about Somali immigrants in Norwegian media to be interesting, but at times too one-sided and problem-oriented to be a reliable data source.

When searching for literature I found that Jennifer Moore Goff's master thesis (2010) is the only comparative study available on this subject. She has done a comparison between the welfare systems in Norway and Minnesota, using Gösta Esping-Andersen's welfare regime types as a framework. In the discussion part she focuses on the impact the different welfare systems has on the outcome of the refugee's integration process. Goff questions the assumption that the welfare system in Minnesota generates more success than the Norwegian system. She uses statistics about the Somali refugees in both societies to prove her points. Goff's thesis can work as background for my thesis, - where she discusses the immigration processes using statistics, I will attempt to elaborate by exploring the qualitative knowledge we have by now in the field of social research.

According to some of the literature, research on newly arrived minority groups like the Somalis are still waiting to be conducted in US overall (Shandy and Fennelly, 2006). I still managed to find several reports and articles concerning the Somalis in Minnesota, Minneapolis or North America in

general. I have made an effort to collect all available literature about Somalis in Minnesota, as I have not found anyone doing this before me. Compared to the extensive research that has been made on Somali immigrants in Norway, the literature I found from Minnesota are limited. This left me with a methodological challenge, as the phenomena described and the conclusions drawn in the Norwegian literature easily could outweigh the ones from the American literature. As a researcher I had to be even more systematic and thorough when going through the literature, to avoid my understanding to be biased.

Most of the articles and reports from Minnesota focus on groups of immigrants, Somalis being one of them. This helped me to detect challenges and strategies which are significant for the Somalis in particular, compared to other immigrant groups. The report that has provided me with the most detailed information about the Somali immigrants are issued by the research foundation Wilder Research Center (2003). As this is an independent non-profit agency I judge the reliability of this report to be high. The report by Robillos at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (2001) has also provided interesting data. I have chosen to include a report regarding Somali immigrants in the neighboring state Wisconsin (Schaid and Grossman 2003). This report described challenges facing Somalis living and working in a small rural community in Wisconsin, but in proximity to Minneapolis and in interaction with the Somali community there. I have also done a search for literature about Somalis in US in general, to see if I could find information of interest. The report “Migration and racial formations among Somali immigrants in North America (Kusow 2006) is included in my study, as it goes deeper into the issues about perception of race and racism. A Swedish professor in economics, Benny Carlson, has done a comparison between Minnesota and Sweden, “Somali in Minneapolis” (2004) that I found interesting both as a source of information about Minnesota, and as a comparison. Unfortunately, some of the research I have found from Minnesota are of older date, but seen together I judge the data to be reliable for my purpose.

In Norway the literature on Somali immigrants is extensive, and I had to make a selection. Statistics Norway provides detailed statistics concerning the Somali immigrants, and reports summarizing and comparing these data to other immigrant groups. I have chosen to focus on the newest reports from Statistics Norway. Two books can be considered seminal works about Somalis in Norway: “Culture and generation” (Engebretsen and Fuglerud, 2009) and “Identity and practice” (Fangen, 2008), as

well as the report “Somalis in exile in Norway” (Engebrigtsen and Farstad 2004). Other recent literature that I found relevant is Cindy Horst’s study about remittance sending (Horst, 2008), particularly because she has also studied the same phenomena in Minnesota (Horst 2006). I have included one study of older date, “Somalis in diaspora” (Højdahl 2000) as I found it very relevant for my research. As in the American literature, information about Somalis compared to other immigrant groups has helped me discover issues of special interest regarding this group.

## **2.6 Key words**

*Immigration, integration, Minnesota, Norway, refugee, Somali, welfare dependency.*

## **2.7 Main Concepts**

I have selected three concepts that I want to define for the reader, to clarify my use of the concepts throughout this thesis. Several other concepts could have been the subjects of such clarification, but I found these to be the most important ones.

### **2.7.1 Immigrant**

An *immigrant* is defined by Statistics Norway to be a person who is born abroad to two foreign-born parents, and who has moved to Norway (Statistics Norway). I deliberately use the term Somali *immigrants* and not *refugees* in my thesis. The majority of Somalis have come as refugees or asylum seekers to Norway and Minnesota, or they have been granted permission to stay as close relatives of refugees or asylum seekers (family reunification) (Statistics Norway; Ronningen 2004). I choose to use the neutral definition *immigrant* to cover all these groups in one.

### **2.7.2 Integration, integration process**

When immigrants are settling in the new society, there is a period of acculturation taking place, where both the immigrants and the host society adjust to each other. Integration can be described as a acculturation process where the immigrants own culture and identity is maintained, at the same time as interaction with, and inclusion into, the host society are emphasised (Fitzpatrick 2006, 6). Integration of immigrants is described as a goal by the governments in both Norway and THE US (Ministry of children, equality and social inclusion a; US Department of Health and Human

Services) though the connotation of the concept differs, as I will show by discussing the case of the Somali immigrants.

### **2.7.3 Welfare dependency**

Dependency is by Fitzpatrick defined as “an economic state of reliance on welfare benefits, or to a social reliance on welfare agencies and/or carers to meet personal care needs” (2006, 287). The debate about welfare dependency is tied to a critique of the welfare state, and the question raised is whether too generous benefits represent a moral-hazard problem: “which could result in overuse of benefits, benefit fraud or even demise of the work ethic” (Fitzpatrick 2006, 1287).

## ***2.8 Facts about Somalia***

Somalia is located on the Horn of Africa. The country was a former Italian and English colony. After gaining independence in 1960, the country was ruled by the dictator Siad Barre. In 1991, several warlords engaged in the fall of Barre, after years of conflict. Since then, a civil war has been going on in the country, causing an ongoing humanitarian crisis and political and administrative chaos (Landinfo). According to UNHCR, Somalia is considered one of the most insecure places in the world (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). The humanitarian crisis in the country is severe, due to active fighting between different political fractions, alternating cycles of draught and flood, and difficulties securing humanitarian aid to reach the population.

The population in Somalia is estimated to be around 10 million people. Of these, 1, 28 million are internally displaced within Somalia. Another 1 million are living in the Diaspora in the Persian Gulf, Western Europe, North-America and Australia (Landinfo). Hundreds of thousands are located in the neighbouring societies of Kenya, Yemen and Ethiopia. The majority of the refugees have left their homes from the beginning of the 1990's until today.

Around half of the population in the country is nomads or half nomads (Landinfo). Herds and farming are important ways of making a living, as well as trading. Islam is the religion of 99% of the population, but the influence religion has on the society varies in different parts of the country (Siyad et al, 2007). Somali and Arabic are official languages, but Italian and English are still used to

a certain extent. Only 25% of the adult Somali population is literate As few as 6, 7 % of women in rural areas are literate (Landinfo).

The population is organized in clans, following the father's blood-line. The importance of the clan has varied during different historical periods, and in different parts of the country. The civil war has lead to an increased importance of clan, due to the break down of other organizational factors in the society. The importance of clan in the Diaspora can vary: for newly arrived immigrants it can be a valuable part of network, and on occasions like funerals and weddings clan are important for most Somalis. But many people want to emphasize less on clan in the Diaspora, as it has been a source of conflicts and war in the home-country. The second generation growing up in the Diaspora is not very focused on their clan (Siyad et al, 2007).

The traditional family pattern in Somalia is large extended families living under the same roof. Almost half of the Somali women give birth to more than five children. Divorces are culturally acceptable, not uncommon, and can be initiated by both men and women. In most families there has been a traditional pattern of roles, with a male bread-winner and the woman taking care of children and home. In the capital Mogadishu many women were working outside of the home before the start of the civil war (Siyad et al 2007).

## ***2.9 Post Immigration Policies***

In his critique of the Norwegian welfare system, Helskog repeatedly refers to policies in Norway which keeps newly arrived refugees out of the labour force for two years (Helskog 2010, 96, 165). The policy which corresponds to this description is the *Introductory Program*, implemented in 2005 (Ministry of children, equality and social inclusion b), and I choose to examine this policy more closely. I searched for a policy from Minnesota to compare with the Introductory Program, and found the *Refugee Cash Assistance Program, RCA* to be the most similar (Minnesota Department of Human Services a, b). These two policies both provide services and economic support for refugees in their first phase of settling in the new society. The groups admitted to the Introductory Programme in Norway and the RCA in Minnesota are not the exact same: for instance will a family with children be eligible for cash assistance through other policies in Minnesota (Minnesota Department of Human Services a), while all adult newly arrived refugees in Norway are obliged to

follow the Introductory Programme (Ministry of children, equality and social inclusion b). But as examples of policies they are the ones I found most equal, and thus most relevant to compare. Numerous policies in both Norway and Minnesota are relevant for newly arrived refugees. But by selecting one from each society I aim to illustrate some of the differences in policies, and to found a basis for discussion.

The objective of the RCA is “to help transmission from social services to paid employment” (Minnesota Department of Human Services b). The objective of the Introductory Programme is to “increase the possibility of newly arrived immigrants participating in working and social life and to increase their financial independence” (Lovdata). While the RCA has a purely economic objective, the Introductory Programme in addition to economy has a clear emphasis on participation in the society.

The RCA program lasts for *up to* 8 months, while the Introductory Programme lasts for 2 years (and can be extended with one more year, for example for illiterate users (Ministry of children, equality and social inclusion b). This illustrates that there are different expectations in the two societies about how fast a refugee can be expected to be economic independent and integrated into the society. The RCA aims to get the refugee into paid employment *as soon as possible* and the program will then be stepped down (Minnesota Department of Human Services b). The Introductory Programme on the other side is expected to last the full time-period of two years, but *can* be stopped if the refugee finds employment (Lovdata).

Both programs have a strong focus on work related skills and preparation for the employment market. In addition, the Introductory Programme prioritizes language skills and knowledge about the Norwegian Society. The RCA program *may* include language training and education up to high-school level (Minnesota Department of Human Services b). Knowledge about the society in Minnesota is not mentioned in the policy description. (It needs to be added here that knowledge about the society and language training will be offered by agencies responsible for the first 90 days of settlement (Minnesota Department of Human Services a).



The RCA program is administered by county agencies (in 79 counties) or by Voluntary Agencies, VOLAGS (in eight counties). Before renewing contracts, the state will assess the success of the work performed by the agencies: “the contract outcomes for the vendors are based on enabling families and individuals to achieve economic self-sufficiency” (Minnesota Department of Human Services b). The services of the Introductory Programme are delivered by the municipalities, using publicly employed social workers as case managers. There are no success-criteria tied to the job. In the discussion part of the thesis I will elaborate how these two policies influence the integration processes of the Somali immigrants in the two societies.

### **3. Somali immigrants in Minnesota and Norway, findings and discussion**

This chapter is divided into four main parts. I start with a closer assessment of the Somali population in the two societies, and by identifying groups of special concern as described in research. I will then continue by describing and discussing strategies used by the Somali immigrants themselves, strategies used by the governments, and overall structural factors within each society, which all three influence the integration processes of the group.

#### ***3.1 Two societies, two different groups of Somali immigrants?***

Helskog questions the rumours going on in Norway about American “cream-skimming” of refugees (Helskog 2008, 104). He refers to an ongoing debate in Norway about whether THE US is selecting the most resourceful refugees and admit them entry to the country, while “any” refugee can come to Norway. This is supposed to found a difference in the immigrant population in the two societies, allegedly explaining for example low employment rates among immigrants in Norway compared to the US. One of Helskog’s examples shows that on the contrary, the Norwegian government can be said to be the one using a selection process based on evaluation of who are best fitted to integrate in Norway (Helskog 2008, 105).

As mentioned above, in my initial search for qualitative data I found it difficult to obtain comparable statistics about the characteristics of individuals within the group of Somalis migrating to each society. But by reviewing literature from both societies I have found no evidence of significant differences of populations. The Somali population in both societies is most of all being characterised as a *diverse group* when it comes to level of education, literacy, work-experience, geographical origin in Somalia, gender, age, and exposure to possible traumatizing events and so on. Some groups of the population are singled out as groups of special concern, as I will get back to in the next chapter, but these groups of concern are the same in both societies.

I have found that the process of immigration differs between the two societies. With almost exclusively Somali asylum seekers in Norway (Statistics Norway), the Norwegian government has had no influence on the composition of the immigrant group. Helskog’s example of the Norwegian

authorities selecting the immigrants is not relevant concerning Somali immigrants, as this example was not tied to asylum seekers. The majority of Somalis in US are issued refugee status from abroad (Ronningen 2004). But as shown by Goff (2010, 33) the requirements for entry into the US are not related to education, work experience or willingness to integrate, but to issues like criminal record, drug abuse and communicable diseases. I have not found evidence in research proving that the admission processes causes any significant differences in the population groups. Altogether I have found no evidence that the group of Somali immigrants derives considerably between the two societies. I conclude that the populations of Somali immigrants in the two societies are comparable. In this context I agree with Helskog's view: the alleged success of Somali immigrants in US compared to Norway cannot be explained by differences in the group of immigrants settling in each society.

### ***3.2 Population estimates and employment rates of Somali immigrants in Minnesota and Norway***

Helskog claims that it is difficult to find unemployed Somalis in Minneapolis (Helskog 2008, 93). He refers to employment rates from US Census 2000: 65% of Somali men are employed, and 35 % of women (Helskog 2008). Helskog writes that the employment rates have improved since these statistics were collected, but he does not display any evidence to prove this. He compares the rates from Census 2000 to employment rates among Somali immigrants in Norway in 2007, showing around 15 % lower rates than in Minnesota for both men and women. As previously mentioned, it is difficult to obtain comparable statistics concerning the population of Somali immigrants in Norway and Minnesota. Still, I will try to sum up some of the available statistics here, to provide a clearer picture of the immigrant group in the two societies. I will also use some statistics throughout the thesis to illustrate issues of interest.

The newest available statistics about the Somali population in Minnesota are still from the US Census 2000. The US Census is a survey conducted every ten years by the US Census Bureau. According to the Minnesota State Geographic Center, updated information for the state from the Census 2010 will not be available in many years (Ronningen 2010). The Number of Somali immigrants in Minnesota in 2000 counted 11.151 (Ronningen 2010). In Norway in 2001, the population of Somali immigrants were similar: 11.130 (Lie, 2004). A newer estimate is found in the

American Community Survey from 2008: 26.895 Somali immigrants in Minnesota (Ronningen 2010). The Minnesota State Geographic Center judges this estimate to be too low, and has estimated the number of Somalis in the state by May 2010 to be around 45.000 (Ronningen 2010). Statistics Norway has calculated that there is 25.469 Somalis in Norway by January 1st 2010. Out of these, 18.349 are immigrants, and 7.147 are children born in Norway of two Somali parents (Statistics Norway). The majority of the Somali immigrants in both societies have arrived after 1991 (Statistics Norway; Ronningen 2004).

Differences in employment rates for Somali immigrants in the two societies are commented by Helskog, and in the media-debate about integration in Norway. The numbers used in media varies. I have not been able to find any newer statistics about employment rates in Minnesota than the ones used by Helskog as described in the introduction-chapter: 65 % for men and 35 % for women (Ronningen 2010). On country level, employment rates for Somali immigrants in THE US in 2000 are 50 % (U.S. Census Bureau). The most *comparable* numbers I have found in the Norwegian Statistics are from 4th quartile of 2002, showing employment rates of 29 %, 34.5 % for men and 21.9 % for women (Lie 2004, 50). The most *updated* available employment rates for Somali immigrants in Norway are from 4<sup>th</sup> quartile of 2009: 31.5 % for the Somali population as a whole, 39.5 % for men and 22.3 for women (Statistics Norway). These statistics shows that there *are* differences in employment rates in the two societies, and that the rates in Norway have remained on a stable, low level over time. But as newer statistics are lacking from Minnesota, it is difficult to draw a conclusion about the Somali immigrants' success in the two societies based on employment rates.

### ***3.3 Groups of special concern among the Somali immigrants***

When studying scholarly literature about Somali immigrants from Norway and Minnesota, I found two groups being pointed out in both societies as groups of special concern: illiterate and people with incomplete education, and single mothers. Other groups of concern emphasized in research are elderly, disabled, mentally ill and unaccompanied minors. Also high educated Somalis having problem with access to the labour market are pointed out as a group of concern (Fangen 2008). I will not go into these last groups, but choose to focus on the two first, as these include a high percentage of the Somali immigrant population, and are frequently referred to in research. Helskog also shows

special interest for these two groups, as he describes examples of illiterate immigrants who find employment in US (Helskog 2008, 117), and points at the debate about mechanisms behind divorce rates for Somali immigrants in Norway (Helskog 2008, 168).

### **3.3.1 Illiterate and people with incomplete education**

One group among the Somali immigrants is generally accentuated in research as a group which calls for special concern: illiterate and people with incomplete education. In Norway, 27.9 % of Somali immigrants in 2005/2006 report that they have not fulfilled *any* education (Henriksen 2007). In US census 2000, 23, 7 % of the Somali immigrants in US reports to have finished *less* than 9<sup>th</sup> grade of education (U.S. Census Bureau). There are no statistics available describing how many of Somali immigrants in Minnesota are illiterate. Regarding the population residing in Somalia, only 25% are considered literate (Landinfo).

In the research from both societies illiteracy is described as an obstacle when it comes to entering the labour market. The concern is expressed both by the Somali immigrants themselves, and by agents working with the group (Engebriksen and Fuglerud 2009; Siyad et al 2007; Wilder Research Center 2003; Robillos 2001). Illiteracy causes difficulties in qualifying for works, but also in qualifying for the regular work-preparation programs (Wilder Research Center 2003). The time needed for education can be extensive before these immigrants are able to find employment. In addition to the large numbers of the group being illiterate, many Somalis have had their education interrupted by the civil war (Siyad et al 2007).

Another concern regarding this group is the effect on the next generation: parent's lack of education leads to a longer road towards learning the host country's language. This can have a negative impact on the children's integration, because the parents are not able to help them with homework and find it difficult to communicate with the teachers (Robillos 2001; Siyad et al 2007).

The large number of the Somali immigrants being illiterate or having incomplete education implies that this immigrant group faces particular challenges when it comes to integration, and I will come back to this throughout the thesis. Among other issues, I will argue that openings in the un-skilled labour market are crucial for the success in entering the labour market for these groups.

### **3.3.2 Single mothers**

In both societies single Somali mothers, often with larger groups of children, are pointed out as another particular group of concern. In Somali culture divorces are common, and can be initiated by both men and women (Siyad et al 2007). Some women have been widowed, and others again are getting divorced after arrival in their new host society. Challenges that single mothers encounters, described in research from both societies, are lack of time available to go to work, education or qualification-programs when caring for many children by her self (Engebrigtsen and Farstad 2004; Wilder Research Center 2003). Another obstacle is finding childcare. In Norway the limited number of available places in kindergartens is referred to as a problem (Siyad et al 2007). In Minnesota the problems of accessing culturally suitable and affordable childcare are issues of concern for Somali mothers (Wilder research Center 2003, Shandy and Fennelly, 2006, 16).

In Norway every third Somali child grows up in a family with only one provider (Statistics Norway). In these families, 85 % of the household income derives from different social welfare policies. In US as a whole, 69.3 % of the Somali families with female householder have income below poverty level (US Census Bureau) These statistics indicate that single mothers stand out as a group of particular concern when it comes to integration, and I will return to this in chapter 3.4.2 about social welfare policies (page....).

Knowing that many Somali women are single heads of households with many children, this group clearly influences the employment rates for Somali immigrants in both societies, as these women for shorter or longer periods of time will be home caring for children, and not be counted in the labour force.

### ***3.4 Strategies used by Somali immigrants***

Several challenges facing immigrants in the resettlement process are general for all immigrant groups, such as how to cope with language difficulties, cultural differences, and problems related to entry into the labour market. The strategies used by the immigrants to overcome these challenges vary. According to research, several strategies are standing out as significant for the Somali immigrants in both Norway and Minnesota. Some of these particular strategies are described by Helskog from Minnesota; like the concentration of population in Minneapolis, and the establishment

of Somali businesses in the city (Helskog 2008, 102). Other strategies I have included in this chapter in an attempt to come closer to completing the picture about Somali immigrants in the two societies.

### **3.4.1 The concentration of population in the two major cities**

Helskog finds the enclave of Somalis clustering in Minneapolis to be positive for development of Somali businesses (Helskog 2008, 102). He also points to some negative effects of immigrant groups clustering in enclaves, like the risk of delaying language proficiency. Research describes a tendency towards concentration of the population in major cities in both societies.

Over 44 % of the Somali population in Norway live in the capital of Oslo (Henriksen 2007). Somali immigrants in Oslo have some of the lowest employment rates and at the same time the highest rates of Somali immigrants *not* taking education (Henriksen 2007). If neither work nor education can explain the high concentration of Somalis in Oslo, there must be other factors pulling the group to the city. Pull factors can be family-members living there, the biggest Somali community, mosques for practicing religion and the attraction of the, in many immigrants eyes, only urban centre in Norway.

The centre of the Somali community in Minnesota is in Minneapolis. In 2000, 66 % of the Somalis in Minnesota lived in Hennepin County, where Minneapolis is the county seat (Ronningen 2010). The Somali community in Minneapolis is described as a vibrant, active enclave, where Somali businesses and organizations take care of the community's needs, drawing more and more Somalis to the city from all over US (Carlson 2006). The creativity and energy in this environment are viewed as a positive force, encouraging Somali immigrants to start their own businesses and take active part in the community's social, political and religious activities (Carlson 2006; Carlson 2007; Robillos 2001).

Concentration of population in the urban centres generates unity and strength among the immigrants, but can make interacting with the rest of the population more difficult. Putnam (2000) makes use of the concepts bonding and bridging social capital: Bonding social capital refers to capital which reinforces *exclusive* identities and mobilizes solidarity. One example used by Putnam is dense networks in ethnic enclaves, which "provide crucial social and psychological support for

less fortunate members of the community, while furnishing start-up financing, markets, and reliable labour for local entrepreneurs” (Putnam 2000, 22). Bridging social capital refers to *inclusive* capital and outward looking networks which provide better opportunities for “linkage to external assets and for information diffusion” (Putnam 2000, 22). The enclave in Minneapolis strengthens the Somali immigrants bonding social capital, but on the other side, the concentration of the population impairs the opportunities for bridging social capital. This again can influence the language skills and the knowledge about the host-society among the immigrants, leaving the American Somalis as successfully functioning individuals, *within* their own group. The same pattern can be detected among Somalis in Oslo, but in research the Somali community in Oslo is not described as dense and as strong as the community in Minneapolis. Like Helskog himself states, concentration of population in enclaves has both positive and negative sides. I will discuss these issues further in the following chapters about social capital.

### **3.4.2 Use of social capital: The entrepreneur spirit**

Helskog claims that in Minneapolis, people look upon the Somalis as hard working and as experienced traders (Helskog 2008, 93). He finds the US positive for Somalis because there is less bureaucracy to overcome before starting a business (compared to Norway), and because the self made man and the American dream are parts of the values funding the society (Helskog 2008, 102 and 108),

Several sources (Carlson 2006; Horst 2006; Siyad et al 2007) claim that Somalis are entrepreneurs: they are used to make a living doing small scale trade or other business in Somalia and in Kenya. In Minnesota several Somali immigrants have started their own businesses. In 2004 there were 600 Somali run businesses in the state (Samatar, 2005). Oslo has the highest percentage of self-employed Somali immigrants in Norway; still they count for only 3 % of the population group (Pettersen 2009). In the report “Somalis in exile in Norway”, informants claim that the Norwegian bureaucracy is too complicated and the starting costs are too high, causing few Somalis to start on their own (Engebrigtsen and Farstad 2004).

As I have found the two groups of immigrants to be comparable in the two societies, I must also conclude that the alleged *entrepreneur spirit* is present in both groups. The entrepreneur spirit does



not seem to find good breeding ground in the Norwegian society. While in Minnesota, and in particular Minneapolis, conditions are described as close to ideal because of the enclave economy and the American society encouraging the self made man (Carlson 2006).

Samatar (2005) describes challenges facing Somalis who are starting their own businesses in Minnesota: financing, planning and market isolation being some of them. He lists examples of successful entrepreneurship, but also of businesses encountering difficulties due to lack of adequate planning, scarce knowledge about rules and regulations and insufficient financial control. Samatar (2005) emphasises lesson learning from the business owners who *do* succeed in business planning, book-keeping and management. The bureaucracy faced by the Somalis in Minnesota is clearly also a challenge which needs to be overcome, similar to Norway.

There needs to be done an evaluation of the economic success and the working conditions among the American Somali-owned businesses before using these as evidence in the debate about integration in the two societies. The downside of immigrant entrepreneurship should be taken into consideration, as described in the report “Research Perspectives on Migration, (1997,11) referred in Castles and Miller (2003, 187): “There is even reason to suspect that immigrant self-employment is more of a survival strategy than an indication of socio economic success – more, that is, of a lifeboat than a ladder”. Goff (2010, 46) also states the importance of not using a few peoples’ success as a measure of a whole population-groups success. On the other side, one should not underestimate the power of role models and the value of a positive, progressive environment when it comes to realizing people’s migration dreams.

### **3.4.3 More about social capital and the question of social mobility**

One of Helskog’s examples of a good role model is Barack Obama (Helskog 2008, 38). Son of an African immigrant, coming from a broken home with scarce economic resources, his story is an extraordinary example, showing the opportunities in the American society. Other examples used by Helskog describe how immigrants climb their way up through the American system (Helskog 2008, 92 and 18).

In research from Minnesota, positive forces within the Somali society are in focus: there are active organizations (Robillos 2001) and a vibrant environment connected to the districts of the Somali-run businesses in Minneapolis (Carlson 2006). The unity of the Somalis in Minnesota is seen as their strength, and the success of some of the business-owners are role models for others to follow. The Somali community in Oslo has been struggling with lack of unity: as many as 21 organizations are registered, but no common umbrella organization (Engebrigtsen and Farstad 2004, Haase 2010). Lack of Somalis in higher positions in Norwegian society is also described as a problem: Without Somalis who can work as mentors and build bridges from the Somali community into the Norwegian, social mobility is becoming increasingly difficult (Engebrigtsen and Farstad 2004). Somalis with higher education are reported not to be hired in relevant positions (Fangen 2008).

Fangen calls for a niche labour market among Somalis in Norway, where newly arrived Somali immigrants can be employed in existing businesses run by already settled Somalis (Fangen 2008, 187). One example of this is shown by Siyad et al.: theory-tests for taxi-licence which has been held by Somalis, for other Somalis, connected to mosques in the city, contributing to the high number of Somali taxicab-drivers in Oslo (2007, 24).

Positive examples of successful Norwegian Somalis are sometimes communicated in media, but the negative focus that has been going on for years are still prevalent (Engebrigtsen and Fuglerud 2009). This can affect the initiative and the self confidence of the immigrants (Siyad et al 2007; Fangen 2008).

Another issue regarding social capital is the role of the state. The immigrants are coming from a society where the state has not functioned for the last 20 years. Their social capital is related to coping in a society without an active government. Family and clan have been taking care of risk reduction and risk mitigation. Relating to bureaucracy in the host societies must be a huge challenge for the immigrants. In her book "Identity and Practice" Katrine Fangen (2008) describes that many Somali immigrants feel offended by the way they are met by Norwegian social workers and other professionals. She ties this experience to fall of personal status and lack of experience with bureaucracy (Fangen 2008, 75). Also in the American research these problems can be detected: In the report "The issues behind the outcomes" (Wilder Research Center 2003), Somali respondents

express scepticism towards the intentions of case workers, and stress “the uneven implementation of the social contract” (between the welfare recipients and the social worker) (Wilder research Center 2003, 5). The issues regarding trust can be an obstacle in the integration process, leaving the immigrants to not utilizing opportunities and constraining themselves in the meeting with the bureaucracies in both societies.

#### **3.4.4 Maintaining Strong Family ties**

Helskog mentions Somalis gaining respect from Americans about their strong family values (Helskog 2008, 93). In other research, one of the strengths about the Somali immigrants emphasized in both societies is the tradition to take care of family members and more distant relatives. Safia Abdi Haase (2010) describes this tradition by the use of the Somali concept “Astur”, an obligation to take care of family and provide assistance for the less fortunate (Haase 2010, 12). She states that in the diaspora the obligation of Astur applies to all other Somalis, regardless of their clan of origin.

The strong bonds between the Somalis in the diaspora are described in research from both societies as a challenge when it comes to housing: the obligation to house others in need can lead to conflicts with landlords and neighbours (Robillos 2001; Shandy and Fennelly 2006; Engebriksen and Farstad 2004). Rules and regulations on housing in the host societies are found to conflict with the traditional Somali obligation to take care of other group members. The different use of the concept “family” in the host society and among the Somali immigrants can lead to a cultural clash, illustrated by this example from Somali welfare recipients in Minnesota: “...participants find they are penalized for offering or accepting help outside the nuclear family” (Wilder research Center 2003, 100).

Engebriksen and Fuglerud (2009) have studied the networks of the Somali immigrants in Norway. For the most part networks were consisting of family-members, not friends. This can have implications for integration, as expanding the network to include members outside of the family is an opportunity to build bridges into the Norwegian society (as described previously in sub-chapter 3.3.1).

### 3.4.5 Maintaining Religion

Helskog argues that in general Muslims in America feel less marginalized and oppressed than Muslims in Europe (Helskog 2008, 18). He comments on the debate in Europe and Norway whether schoolgirls should be allowed to wear a head-scarf or not. He claims: “In the US they generally do not care about what people wear on their head, as long as they can look each other in the eyes and behave decently” (Helskog 2008, 125, my translation). Helskog also describes how the importance of the American congregations can be seen as an advantage for immigrants, opposed to the more secular Norwegian society. There is a possibility of religious groups feeling a common respect and unity (Helskog 2008, 124). In research I have found that maintaining their religion is a challenge for Somali immigrants in both societies, but also an important strategy for maintaining their own identity.

In Minnesota, women wearing the religious head scarf *hijaab* or long skirts are reported having problems with being hired (Robillos 2001, 9, Wilder Research Center 2003, 106). Some women also experienced on-the-job discrimination, as they after being hired was told to give up their clothing, or to work where customers could not see them (Wilder Research Center 2003, 106). A majority of the women interviewed in the report “Somali community Needs Assessment project” indicated that they “would rather forgo the prospect of a job than betray their religious precepts” (Robillos 2001, 7). These findings contradict Helskog’s view on the matter.

Fangen (2008, 98) describes maintaining religion, and for some: adaption of even more strong moral codes than in their country of origin, as strategies used by Somali immigrants for coping with challenges and obstacles they encounter as immigrants in Norway. In the report “Somalis in exile in Norway” the author states “in my material few (Somali immigrants) have mentioned religion as a problem related to work” (Engebrigtsen and Farstad 2004, 32, my translation). Other scholars do not emphasize religion in their material. As Muslims are singled out as a group which experience discrimination in the labor market in Norway (The Directorate of Integration and Diversity a), it is possible that religious obstacles are under-communicated in the Norwegian qualitative research.

Shandy and Fennelly (2006) describes religion as a challenge when it comes to integration: The Somalis in rural areas commute to Minneapolis to practice their religion there. This weakens the ties to the local community where they live and work. When comparing Somalis and Sudanese

immigrants in the same local community researchers found it easier for Sudanese Christians to be integrated: the churches worked as integration agents, welcoming the Sudanese and interacting with the group from the beginning of their settlement. The Somalis did not have a similar gateway to the local community; there were no other Muslims present in the society to welcome them. (The group of immigrants described in this report was not enrolled in any welcoming programs in this community, as they were secondary migrants from other parts of the US). Another interesting example of how maintaining religion can influence integration processes are found by Layman and Basnyat (2003): In the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area the Somali immigrants describe how they spend many hours every week in the mosque. They enter in groups together with other Somalis, but they mix with people from many ethnic backgrounds while they are there. Thus, the mosque is an arena for both bonding and bridging (Layman and Basnyat 2003). As maintaining their religion is an important strategy for Somalis both in Norway and Minnesota, I found the issues tied to religion and integration very interesting. Both societies has a Christian majority population, and how the Muslim immigrants are met, and how they cope with challenges, are important for integration of this group. Unfortunately, I have not found much research regarding this issue.

### **3.4.6 Remittance sending**

In the book “Culture and Generation” Engebrigtsen and Fuglerud (2009) claim that Somalis are not yet settled in the Norwegian society, because of the ongoing conflict in Somalia. The authors compare the Somalis to the Tamils from Sri Lanka, and find the Tamils in Norway “having had the time and opportunity to solve the acute problems flight implies, and organize their relations to family in different societies, to help the ones who shall be helped, to move the ones who shall be moved, to smuggle the ones who shall be smuggled” (Engebrigtsen and Fuglerud 2009, 12, my translation). The Somalis are still in the middle of this process. Horst (2006) displays examples of Somalis in the Dadaab refugee-camps in Kenya who are depending on remittances sent from relatives to survive everyday life in the camp, with food shortage and minimal opportunities to earn an income. Some refugees are fearing for their own or family member’s safety in the camps, and are waiting for enough money sent to be able to flee from the situation. Horst also describes the money transfer going from the diaspora to groups directly involved in the armed conflict in Somalia, and to organizations working with rebuilding the country (Horst 2006 and 2008). She has found that remittances are sent from both Norway and Minnesota. The amounts of money sent are difficult to

register, but among Holst's informants in Minnesota she has registered amounts ranging from US \$ 200 to 1000 per month sent by individuals. She has found that almost all of the immigrants send some money. SSB has collected information about remittance sending from immigrant groups in Norway: 74 % of the Somali immigrants state that they send remittances (Blom and Henriksen, 2006).

The extensive remittance sending raises questions regarding integration: Will the immigrants have money left for themselves to improve their standard of living in the diaspora, or will all money be sent away after minimum necessities in the host society are covered? Examples from research indicate that not always basic needs as rent or furniture purchasing are prioritized over remittance sending (Horst 2006). Many immigrants in Minnesota have two or more jobs at a time in order to earn money for their relatives. The immigrants work hard, but maintain a poor standard of living.

In the report "Somalis in Norway" remittance sending is referred to as an obstacle for Somali immigrants in Norway when it comes to participation in qualification programmes: "...it is difficult for newly arrived Somalis to settle in the classroom and in the work-training programme. The most important is to get a job and earn money, to be able to send something home" (Siyad et al 2007, 21, my translation).

The remittance sending can be of great importance for the receiver, in some cases even saving lives. But for the sender the constant obligation to send money away have consequences for the opportunities to settle in the new society. The obligation to send money can be an obstacle in integration, as these families will experience an even more difficult economic situation than other immigrant groups. This is a matter of concern because there is already a higher risk of poverty among immigrants than in the main population. Somali families with children are among the group with lowest income in Norway, only 52 % of the income of ethnic Norwegian families (Henriksen 2007). If remittance sending is added, the gap between the Somali and the ethnic Norwegian children increases even more. And as remittance sending is prevalent in both Norway and Minnesota, this concerns also the Somalis in Minnesota.

### ***3.5 Strategies used by governments***

In this chapter I will compare some of the post immigration policies, as well as a few additional aspects of other relevant social welfare and health policies, recognized in research as particularly relevant for the Somali immigrants. The governments in Norway and in Minnesota are implementing targeted policies to meet the basic needs of immigrants in the arrival phase, and to integrate them into the society. The formulation of other policies related to social welfare and health are also very relevant for the integration processes. One of Helskog's main issues is a critique of the Norwegian welfare system, which he accuses to be "not only inefficient, but destroying" (book cover, 2008). He claims the Norwegian welcoming programs for refugees, and the generous welfare policies in general, trap immigrants in the role as welfare receivers. He emphasizes the strong work requirements in the US as empowering for refugees. In the following I assess programs for welcoming refugees in the two societies, before moving on to compare other relevant welfare issues: benefits for single providers and health care coverage.

#### **3.5.1 The Introductory Program and the Refugee Cash Assistance Program**

Helskog's critique of the Norwegian welfare system is mainly targeted at the Introductory Program for newly arrived refugees, for keeping them out of the labour force for as long as two years (Helskog 2008, 96, 165). Helskog claims that the Norwegian system generates welfare dependency, and he embraces the American policies for encouraging employment from the very beginning (Helskog 2008, 165). He also strongly recommends the way American programs are run by voluntary organizations, over the public employee-run Norwegian programs. I will examine these issues by doing a brief comparison of the Refugee Cash Assistance Program, RCA, from Minnesota and the Introductory Program from Norway, as described in chapter 2.10. In the following I will argue that the programs display many similarities, but also differ in the important aspects of duration, provider and content.

The duration of the Introductory Program (two years) keeps immigrants out of the regular labour market for a longer period of time, compared to the programs in Minnesota (maximum 3+8 months, but programs for as long as five years can be provided for refugees with special needs, Minnesota Department of Human Services a). First of all, the duration of the programs has implications for the employment rates in the two societies. When comparing rates, participants in welcoming programs

should be taken into consideration. In some municipalities around 10-20 % of Somalis between 18 and 55 years are participants of the Introductory Program (Pettersen 2009). These individuals are not registered as employed, and thus causing a bias in the employment rates compared to the American rates.

To keep individuals in a program for as long as two years might influence the rest of their career in both a negative and a positive way: critics of the welfare systems can point at the length of the program “clientifying” participants (Helskog 2008) and learning them the habit of a welfare receiver. On the other hand, the Introductory Program provides immigrants with stronger language skills and knowledge about the society that are useful for adjusting in the new society. This can help them get a better job when they in the end enter the labour market. It can also help them be promoted or to obtain an even better position later on in their career. In Minnesota the immigrants quickly integrates into the labour market, but their chances of climbing in the system can be more limited (Wilder Research Center 2003). Evaluation of the Introductory Program in 2009 displays that 44 % of the participants directly moved on to employment or education after completing the program (The Directorate of Integration and Diversity b). For 2008 the number was higher, 53 %. The The Directorate of Integration and Diversity has set a goal of 65 % of participants moving directly into employment or education, and the anticipated result is still not reached. Unfortunately I have not been able to access any statistics measuring the success of the RCA.

It lies within the scope of the Introductory Program to offer work placement and other work training for the participants (Ministry of children, equality and social inclusion b). This is a means to enter the Norwegian labor market, as the participants gather work experience and establish contact with possible future employees. This indicates that there is not necessary a contradiction between participating in a program and gaining access to the labor market.

The different structure of the two programs when it comes to providers is interesting: the Norwegian program is conducted by the municipalities, using their own public employees to provide the services. The program in Minnesota is run by Voluntary Organizations (VOLAGS) or local public agencies on time-limited contracts. Only in 8 out of 79 counties in Minnesota the RCA program are run by VOLAGS. In the remaining 71 counties the program is conducted by county agencies, more



similar to the Norwegian model (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2). But these public agencies can also lose their contracts, unlike the Norwegian agencies. The arguments can be raised like in any debate concerning competition or monopolized services: are the Norwegian social workers doing their best to ensure the success of their clients, or are they just doing their job to collect their salary and go home? Is the competition between the American providers more efficient, and are the requirements for success an incentive for the workers to do an extra effort, as described by Julian Le Grand in his book “The other invisible hand. Delivering Public Services through Choice and Competition” (2007). This evaluation cannot be provided here. A more detailed comparison of the two programs in work would be needed to answer these questions.

Another issue is the way local VOLAGSs can work as gatekeepers when it comes to integration: Helskog describes how volunteers can have a more personal approach than public employees, using themselves and their own social network as a bridge into society for the immigrants. Use of voluntary organizations in the integration work of newly arrived refugees is utilized also in Norway, through programs provided by for example Red Cross and Norwegian Peoples’ Aid. Caseworkers managing the Introductory Program are free to cooperate with private agencies and voluntary organisations (The Directorate of Integration and Diversity). An extended role of the voluntary sector related to integration is under discussion, but has still not been implemented (Ministry of Labour). The main difference between Minnesota and Norway when it comes to voluntary work is that the voluntary organizations in Norway are not given a *formal* role by the government, like in Minnesota, where they run the RCA programs in some areas, and many of the programs for the first 90 days of settlement of refugees (Minnesota Department of Human Services a).

Helskog suggests that also in Norway NGOs should take care of welcoming programs for refugees, following the American model (Helskog 2008, 164). The element of competition will from his point of view enhance the quality of the services. He refers to the difficulties of firing public employees in Norway, even if he or she does a poor job. Also, he claims that volunteers can generate more enthusiasm. These argumentations are supported by a harsh critique of what he views as incompetence among Norwegian refugee workers, compared to the American ones (Helskog 2008, 115). He does not back up his criticism by research-based evidence, and I choose not to go into this

debate. However, I want to take a closer look at his suggestion of change of provider, and how this can influence integration processes of Somali immigrants in Norway.

As I have found in my research, one obstacle for Somali immigrants is to overcome the challenge of distrust in the government. NGOs providing services can in this context be a more appropriate solution. (The American VOLAGs are NGOs working with refugee settlement). Another issue is the tendency to mainly center social network to other Somalis. Involvement of volunteers can build bridges into the Norwegian society. The suggestion of using NGOs for providing services is again reliant on the multicultural climate - the willingness of Norwegians to spend their time assisting immigrants in their process of integration. Another suggestion can be to continue providing services by paid public employees, but expand the extent to which volunteer organizations are involved in integration processes in each local community.

By completing the Introductory Program the immigrants will have met the criteria of having sufficient hours of language training and social subjects lessons to fill the requirements tied to an application of permanent permission to stay in Norway, and an application for Norwegian citizenship (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration). The American system does not require a certain amount of training, but you have to pass the United States Citizenship & Naturalization Exam and Interview before being granted citizenship (Immigration Direct). Robillos (2001) found that “some adults have failed a number of times because they could not understand the questions in English” (Robillos 2001, 7). The different emphasis on language training for newly arrived refugees in the two societies can in this way be a relevant factor when it comes to including or excluding a group from gaining formal citizenship status in the country. Helskog mainly focuses on labour market participation, and does not take these supplementary aspects of integration into consideration.

### **3.5.2 Social welfare and security**

One of Helskog's main arguments is that too good welfare benefits work as disincentives to take on paid employment. As an example he uses the development in welfare policies in US in the 60 and 70s, and he views the increasing number of single mothers on welfare among African-Americans as a result of too generous policies (Helskog 2008, 74). He compares this issue to the increase in divorce rates among Somali immigrants in Norway, and asks if we see a tendency towards the same

development here (Helskog 2008, 168). I will not go into the debate about the mechanisms behind the development of family structures in the African-American society, as this is a complex issue that needs more elaboration than what I can provide within the frame of this thesis. But I will take a closer look at the case of the Somali single mothers in Norway and Minnesota.

In both societies there exist policies working as safety nets for immigrants who have difficulties adjusting in their new society. Minnesota provides programs supporting people with information, professional referral, home-management, parenting skills training and so on (Minnesota Department of Human Services a). Norway provides a similar type of services for immigrants through for instance social service and child welfare legislation. In general, American policies are known to be more restrictive compared to Norwegian, when it comes to level of economic support, means testing and limitations to duration of time a person can receive a benefit (Esping-Andersen 1990). This has implications for vulnerable groups of immigrants who do not have easy access to the labour market, such as single mothers.

In the Norwegian research, a particular interest is dedicated to the group of single mothers among Somali immigrants. Høydahl (2000) investigates the changes within the family when resettling in Norway. She found that some of the divorces are done only formally, while the couple continues their relationship as husband and wife from two different addresses. Other scholars (Engebrigtsen and Farstad 2004; Siyad et al. 2007) mention that some Somali women give birth to more children of their divorced husband also after the divorce. This raises the question whether the divorce is a real separation of the spouses, or only a formality in order to gain extended public support for the family. The Norwegian benefits for single providers are higher than for a married couple. Under these circumstances, the Norwegian welfare benefits can directly influence upon the Somali family structure. The benefits can also be an indirect factor contributing to divorces by giving the women an opportunity to be economic self reliant and not reliant on their husband (Høydahl 2000).

In the Norwegian welfare system the transitional benefit for single providers offers financial support for a period of 3 years (with a possible extension to five years) without work requirements (The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration a). But there is also an existing policy granting a single provider double the amount of a couple's child benefit, NOK 970 per child per month (The

Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration a). This child benefit is provided regardless of whether the parent is working or not. In this context, a single provider will receive higher benefits per child than a couple, also if he or she is in paid employment. If it is true that the Norwegian welfare benefits influences upon the Somali family structure as discussed above, it is not necessarily keeping women out of the labour force. It might as well be a means to gain double child benefit support for the family.

In Minnesota there are examples of single Somali mothers being enrolled in the Minnesota Family Investment program, receiving benefits for up to 5 years. There is a strong work requirement tied to this benefit (Wilder Research Center 2003). Recipients are complaining that the welfare system “provides enough help to survive, but not enough to get ahead” (Wilder Research Center 2003, 106). They ask for better opportunities to learn English and to improve their qualifications, and feel that the welfare system “trap them in low-level jobs that neither pay enough to exit welfare nor offer opportunities to move into better jobs” (Wilder Research Center 2003, 106). Their large family size is pointed out as an additional obstacle in becoming economic self-sufficient.

As single mothers with many children form a significant group of Somali immigrants, policies which accommodate this group are needed. The risk of child poverty is high among this group, as previously mentioned. Thus, there is a dilemma regarding securing proper living conditions for the families on one hand, and providing too generous welfare support that might interfere with family structure, as shown above, on the other hand. There is also a dilemma regarding work requirements for women who care for many children, as they will need extensive time just to care for their own children. The challenges faced by single mothers are recognizable between the two societies. I was not able to find any information in the American research about changes in divorce rates after arrival in Minnesota. This does not prove that the changes in family structure found in Norway do not take place also among Somalis in Minnesota. As I have not found evidence of the reason explanations behind the increasing numbers of divorces among Somali immigrants in Norway, I cannot either dismiss or support Helskog’s view on this issue. More comparative studies about Norway and for instance Minnesota could come closer to an answer whether generous welfare policies are influencing the family structure, or if there are other factors which are more important. This is a

delicate issue concerning people's private spheres, and needs to be approached in a professional manner.

### **3.5.3 Health care**

The provision of health care services differs significantly between the two societies included in this comparison. The public health care policies in Norway cover all inhabitants in the country. Health care in Norway is free for children under 16, for others there is an element of cost-sharing: patients fees must be paid at consultations, but no more than 1840 NOK a year (The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration b). In Minnesota health care services are usually covered through employer or private insurance, if the person is not applicable to MEDICARE or MEDICAID. Health care for refugees are covered by the welcoming programs for refugees (Minnesota Department of Human Services a) but as described earlier, these programs normally come to an end after maximum 11 months.

Many immigrants in Minnesota can be said to find themselves trapped in a situation without opportunities to achieve a health insurance: if you lack language skills, you are offered an entry-level position, which is unlikely to offer medical benefits: "... access to better-paying jobs with benefits requires language and academic skills that most refugees do not have, and which may require a significantly longer period of time for training than state or federal rules permit" (Wilder Research Center 2003, 67).

In one of the reports I have studied I found another interesting issue: In Minnesota the health care system can work as a disincentive for welfare recipients to take on paid employment: If you include the value of the health insurance granted by a welfare program, and other benefits provided like child care support and housing subsidies, the pay per hour needs to be high above minimum wage to make it economically beneficial to take on paid work instead of receiving welfare benefits (Wilder Research Center 2003). This example indicates that questions about the size and dimension of welfare policies should be included also when discussing policies from Minnesota, not only from Norway.

Helskog sees the work-first approach to be combined with a change in welfare policies in Norway toward a more restrictive line (Helskog 2008, 166-167). Helskog emphasizes that you must earn

more money on working, than on receiving social welfare benefits. In research I have found examples of this being a challenge also in Minnesota, when the costs of health insurance are included in the picture.

### ***3.6 Structural factors***

In this chapter I aim to describe and compare some of the overall structural factors within each society which influence integration processes of the Somali immigrants. By *structural factors* I address factors that are not directly controlled by the immigrants themselves *or* by the government in each society, but can be described as results of historical and economical development and globalization trends. I have divided the chapter in two parts, the first part assessing the multicultural climate, including the issues tied to stigmatization, the second part taking a closer look at the labour market opportunities.

#### **3.6.1 The multicultural climate**

The multicultural climate in THE US is an underlying theme throughout Helskog's entire book, starting at the times of early immigration of European settlers and ending with the election of Barack Obama as the new president in 2008. The positive attitude towards immigrants and immigration are emphasized by Helskog as an advantage for immigrants in the US, compared to more scepticism in Norway. He sums up his view of the differences between the two communities in stating that Norwegians are convinced that all *Norwegians* are alike, while Americans claim that all *humans* are alike (Helskog 2008, 114).

Both Norway and the US can be defined to some extent as multicultural societies, as defined by Castles and Miller (2003, 251): "immigrants should be granted equal rights in all spheres of society, without being expected to give up their diversity, although usually with an expectation of conformity to certain key values". But a distinction between the two societies can be made, as the US are associated with the *laissez-faire* approach, where "cultural difference and the existence of ethnic communities are accepted, but it is not seen as the role of the state to ensure social justice or to support the maintenance of ethnic cultures" (Castles and Miller 2003, 252). This approach can be recognized in the post-immigration policies for refugees described earlier in this thesis, as the

limited scope and duration of the policies supports the right to access into the labour market, but only have limited force to ensure social justice among population groups.

Kymlicka describes the US as one of the historically important societies of migration, where “immigrants were encouraged and expected to assimilate to the pre-existing society” (Kymlicka 2007, 71). He describes a change in approach towards race-neutral admission criteria, and an adoption of a more multicultural conception of integration, accepting immigrants’ ethnic identity. Norway is by Kymlicka described as a country which has resisted the trend of multiculturalism when it comes to policies regarding immigrants (Kymlicka 2007, 74). The emphasis on language training and knowledge about the society in the Norwegian post-immigration policies, as described earlier, can be seen as an example of this.

The history of immigration in Norway and Minnesota causes other challenges to the Somali immigrants depending on which society they are immigrating to. One of the challenges is related to race in the American society: Issues about race are debated in the report “Migration and Racial Formations Among Somali Immigrants in North America” (Kusow 2006): In Somalia people are not divided into groups based on racial differences, but on clan-differences. The Somalis interviewed recognizes the racial differences between groups of being of importance for *others* in the American Society, but not for themselves. They hold their identity as *Somalis* as the important one, and do not identify themselves by their colour. Also in the report “The issues behind the outcomes” (Wilder Research Center 2003) findings support that Somalis do not look upon themselves as stigmatized because of their race: Allegations of racism are not mentioned by Somalis in the report, but are common among African Americans interviewed. While refusing to take on the stigma of African Americans, the Somalis in Minnesota can protect themselves from some of the negative effects related to the stigma. But as they are visible Africans, they cannot fully escape from the issue.

In Norway the challenges regarding race do not have the historical background as in US. But still, being a visible minority can have effects on integration processes. The report “Integrated but discriminated” indicates that Africans are the most vulnerable ethnic group when it comes to discrimination in the Norwegian Society (The Directorate of Integration and Diversity a). Muslims

are also pointed out as a risk group in the same report, exposing the Somalis to double risk of being discriminated.

During the last ten years Somali immigrants in Norway have been subject to what Engebrigtsen and Fuglerud have described as a “massive, negative media-pressure” (2009, 79). Example stories of Somalis involved in crime, use of chat, female genital mutilation and low labour market participation have been the focus of journalists. Not the example stories in themselves, but the context in which they are used (to criticize integration) and the one sided negative picture of the population group can be considered as stigmatizing (Engebrigtsen and Fuglerud 2009, 79). The media-enforced stigmatization is also described as an obstacle for Somalis in other research (Siyad et al 2007; Fangen, 2008; Engebrigtsen and Farstad 2004; The Directorate of Integration and Diversity a). The Norwegian media can be said to add to the burden of an already struggling group. This issue is not recognizable in the research from Minnesota.

### **3.6.2 Labour market opportunities**

According to Helskog it is an advantage for immigrants that there are a considerable number of entry level jobs available in the US, in particular for individuals with scarce work experience and a low educational level (Helskog 2008, 90). He uses examples of immigrants working as dish-washers, meat packers and cleaners. Helskog claims that it is better to slowly climb your way up, even if you have to start at the bottom: “worse than being exploited, is not being utilized at all” (Helskog 2008, 166). He suggests that Norway should open up for more low-wage positions, to offer people a starting point for their work career, instead of receiving welfare.

In Minnesota and the nearby states the meat-packing industry and other labour intensive industries like poultry processing, vegetable canning and manufacturing plants have offered job opportunities to immigrants without English proficiency (Shandy and Fennelly 2006; Schaid and Grossman 2003). This has caused secondary migration of Somalis from all over the US to small communities in rural areas of Minnesota. Better job opportunities, but also safer environment for children and better schools are listed as pull-factors for immigrants choosing to leave urban areas for the rural (Schaid and Grossman 2003).



Compared to other immigrant groups in Norway, Somalis have an unemployment rate that are more than double (the accurate numbers from the 4<sup>th</sup> quartile 2007 is an employment rate of 13 % among Somalis, compared to only 5% among immigrants in general (Pettersen 2009). These numbers can imply that there is an interest to work, but the possibilities for Somalis to be hired are lower than for other immigrants. The report “Integration map 2009, Integration under economic recession” argues that the language requirements from Norwegian employers vary with the need of workforce. In economic down-periods the requirements are tightening, while in times of economic growth and extensive need of workforce, it is much easier to find employment without extensive language skills (The Directorate of Integration and Diversity c). The Somalis can be regarded as a group of immigrants who are particularly vulnerable to changes in the economic climate because of their high rates of illiteracy and lack of education. My data is mainly from the time period before the economic recession in 2008; newer data could help complete the picture about the Somali immigrants’ labour market participation.

In the Norwegian context the Somali population in the small city of Hammerfest stands out as an interesting case. Hammerfest is an old fishing-community with 9500 inhabitants in the Northernmost part of Norway. Of the whole population, 141 people are registered to be Somali immigrants in 2007 (Pettersen 2009, 261). The community has from 2002 seen a blooming economic development due to the establishment of the Snow White oil and gas- field offshore. The Somali immigrants in Hammerfest have a reported employment rate of 82 %, compared to 38% on the national level (Henriksen 2007). Alvin Vaseli (2010) describes the employment rates as a result of the following factors: At the development phase of the Snow White plant on Melkøya in Hammerfest municipality, thousands of workers were housed in barracks at the scene. Somali immigrants found employment as cleaners at these barracks. The immigrants were both refugees settled in Hammerfest, and other Somalis moving to the community from all over Norway because of the job opportunities. Increased competition for work force left positions in the fishing industry available for Somalis, as well as in other unskilled positions as cleaners or assistants in public and private sector (Vaseli 2010). (Vaseli also finds the experience and work done by the local immigration services, cooperating with private sector employees, to be of importance for the good results, as well as the small size and transparency of the society). Vaseli describes the employment situation of Somali immigrants in 2010 to be somehow changed: after the completion of the Snow White plant

in 2007, the need for workers decreased, and many of the Somalis who had moved to Hammerfest for work left again. He has found that many of these immigrants were offered positions at other development sites elsewhere in Norway. Of the Somalis remaining in Hammerfest employment rates are still high. Many of the women are employed in the health care sector or in the cleaning industry. There is a tendency towards increased interest in education after the labour market has tightened (Vaseli 2010).

The examples of the meat-packing-district in Minnesota and Hammerfest in Norway indicate that if the labour market has openings, the Somali immigrants in both societies find employment, also without language skills.

Helskog's suggest a change in Norwegian welfare policies towards a more restrictive line, like in America. The report "Experiences with use of economic sanctions in integration programs for refugees" describes examples of integration programs for refugees. One of the programs in the American state of Virginia shows results of 85 % of the users being employed after four months on the program (Djuve and Pettersen 2002). By comparing "softer" policies from Norway, Sweden and Netherlands with the American, the authors find that the incentive to take on paid employment are strongest and work the best in the US system when no other option exists due to limited welfare policies. The authors mention the price to be paid for this success: that some fall behind, and are not picked up by any safety net. According to the authors, the dilemma is whether society should accept that some fall behind. Their suggestion for Norway is to apply a softer model, based on best practice from Sweden and Netherlands. But as I will argue in the concluding part of this thesis, policies need to be evaluated in relation with labour market opportunities and the particular needs of the immigrant in question. The success-rate of 85 % for the particular program might as well be a result of a labour market which is providing openings for immigrants, as a result of a restrictive welfare policy. It is interesting to conduct a comparison with other employment rates as described previously in this thesis: The employment rate after finishing the Norwegian Introductory Program is as low as 44 %, close to half the percentage from the example in Virginia. The employment rate of Somali Immigrants in Minnesota is 65 %. But the employment rates among Somali immigrants in the Norwegian municipality of Hammerfest are as high as 83 %, almost identical to the numbers

from Virginia. This supports my theory that if there are available positions, the immigrants find employment, - including the Somali immigrants.

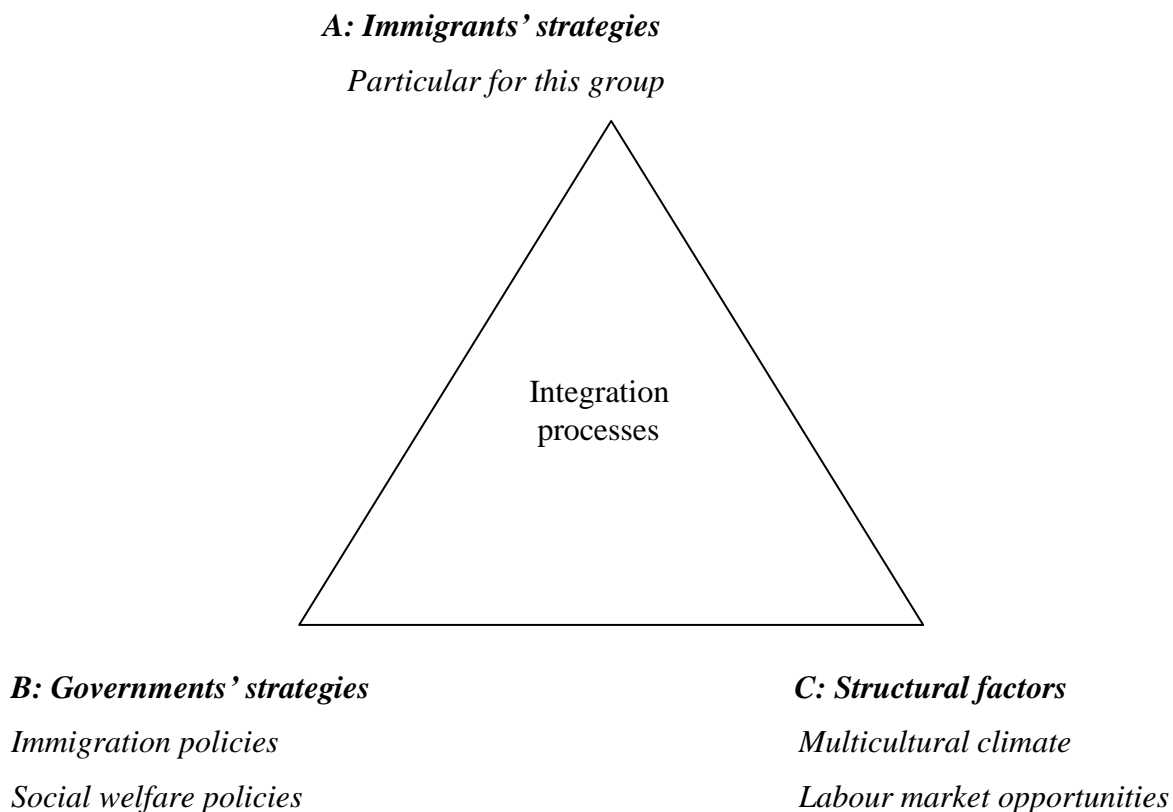
Helskog also adds an idea to open up for changes in labour market. He does not explain how he sees this change, but earlier in his book he describes the US labour market with lower minimum wages as an advantage for refugees, as this provide more entry level positions for this group. The strong protection of workers' rights in Norway is an obstacle on the way to apply this suggestion, and I find it doubtful if the process of improving workers rights is going to reverse, as Helskog's suggestion implies. More realistic is a further development of the underground economy in the informal sector, where un-registered employees work at lower wages without paying tax and without workers rights. If the labour market in Norway remains unchanged, applying Helskog's suggestion of change of policies towards the US way of emphasising rapid labour market participation of immigrants, can force Somali immigrants into the underground economy, or if illegal work are not available; into poverty. On the other hand, if labour market changes due to shifts in the overall economy, his suggestion can make more sense. His suggestion can only be applied if there are job vacancies for unskilled workers with little or no command of the Norwegian language.

## 4. Conclusion

When doing a comparison of research concerning Somali immigrants in the two societies, the *complexity* of the topics in question is the most striking finding. This realisation led me to developing my own “integration model”, which I will present in the first chapter of this conclusion part. Further, I will summarize my findings on Helskog’s book and his viewpoints.

### 4.1 Introducing the “integration model”

I started this thesis with the aim to investigate the integration processes for the Somali immigrants in the two societies. I have by the use of literature detected strategies used by immigrants themselves, strategies used by governments and structural factors which are of importance regarding integration of this particular group in the two selected societies. I have found that is not sufficient to focus on only one of these factors, or two, when analyzing the processes of integration. All three need to be taken into consideration at the same time, as it is the interrelation between the three factors which determines the integration processes. This can be illustrated by applying an integration model:



Integration processes takes place in the space made available between the three factors described in this thesis: Immigrants' strategies, governments strategies and structural factors. If one of the three factors in this model changes, integration processes will change. As I have described throughout the thesis, I can sum up the integration processes of each society in two different examples of this model, describing the specific circumstances in which integration takes place in Norway and in Minnesota.

By introducing the integration model I aim to illustrate that from a scientific perspective, you cannot focus on only one of the three factors, all three needs to be taken into consideration when investigating immigration processes. The model implies that you cannot criticize Norwegian policies and initiate changes on them, without analysing the relationship between the policies, the target group, and structural factors within the society. You can not adopt policies from Minnesota into the Norwegian setting, or vice versa, expecting the same outcome of the integration processes. You can not look at the success, or difficulties, of one immigrant group trying to settle in a society, and expect the same from another group. And you cannot expect the same processes to find place within a society over time, as changes in overall economic development and multicultural climate can have significant influence on integration.

#### ***4.2 “The Immigrants’ Superpower” and research on Somali immigrants.***

The first part of my research question was to answer to what extent the picture Helskog describes about Somali immigrants in Norway and in Minnesota is recognizable in scientific literature. By doing a literature review I have found Helskog's descriptions to be relevant, but often incomplete, and to a certain extent unbalanced. Issues addressed by Helskog are clearly discussed in scholarly literature from the two societies. However, some of the particular challenges Helskog relates to the Norwegian can also be identified in the case of Minnesota. The issues of discrimination based on religious clothing, the problems with facing bureaucracy when starting a business, and the question about generous welfare policies as disincentives to work are some examples. Vice versa, also some of the successful experiences described from Minnesota can also be found in Norway. The example of Hammerfest illustrates this. By searching literature from Norway and Minnesota I found many of the same challenges facing the immigrants in both societies, and similar strategies used by the immigrants to encounter these challenges. I found important differences in the approach used by

governments in the two societies, and various community structures which can be of importance for integration. As described and discussed in part 3 of this thesis, many of Helskog's main issues are also discussed in scholarly literature in both societies.

The second part of my research question was to search for other important issues regarding the integration of this particular immigrant group, which should be uncovered and addressed in the debate on what is considered to be successful integration. Through examining research on the Somali immigrants in both Norway and Minnesota I have found that this particular immigrant group uses similar strategies to accommodate their needs in their integration processes in the two societies. Maintaining strong family ties, maintaining religion, concentration of the population in the major cities and the extensive remittance sending are some of the strategies that characterises the population. Also the characteristics of the population group are similar in the two societies: many children per family, high numbers of single mothers and a large percentage of the adults having scarce or no education. The particular features of the group are calling for specially adjusted strategies for integrating the group in both societies. As I will come back to in the following-, the opportunities for individually adjusting welcoming programs should be utilized to ensure the success of Somali immigrants in both societies.

#### ***4.3 What can Norwegian policy makers learn from the US experience?***

One of Helskog's main objectives is that Norwegian policy makers should learn from the US experience when it comes to integration of immigrants into the main society. Through examining research from both Norway and Minnesota I have evaluated the relevance of Helskog's suggestions, when it comes to integration of Somali immigrants in particular.

Which society provides the best opportunities for the Somali immigrants can be depending on whether you are focusing at short time or long time perspective on integration: In Minnesota, immigrants are more rapidly integrated into the labour market, compared to in Norway. This opportunity is an important advantage for Somalis who want to maximize their income due to remittance sending. In the Norwegian system the immigrants are in the IP for two years, receiving a benefit lower than a minimum paid fulltime work. The short-time opportunities of maximizing income are better in Minnesota then in Norway. On the other hand, long time opportunities for

maximizing income by landing a better paid position or being promoted can be better in Norway. For immigrants who are responsible for the wellbeing of family-members and relatives caught in a difficult living situation in Somalia or neighbouring counties, the importance of maximizing income in a short-time perspective can out-shadow the value of a better prospect in a long-time perspective.

Helskog's suggestion to reduce welfare benefits will have no positive effect for Somali immigrants, if there are no openings in the labor market for including the group. By openings in the labor market I first of all ask for *positions* available for people with scarce education, but also *willingness to employ* uneducated *and* educated Somalis in relevant positions. Applying restrictive welfare policies without changes in the market and in the way the immigrant group are perceived in the Norwegian society might only force some of the Somali immigrants out of the category "not in labor force" and into the category "unemployed". I suggest the group of unemployed immigrants should be targeted first, before welfare recipients. The most important challenge for Norway as of today is not to force a home-working single mother of five into paid employment, but to offer better opportunities for unemployed, job seeking individuals. *After* the unemployed Somali immigrants are included into the labor market, it can be interesting to target the part of this population group that is not included in the labor force.

Many Somali immigrants belong to groups that are marginal in their attachment to labour market, like single providers and illiterate. The success of the integration processes for the Somali immigrants in each society are therefore strongly influenced by economic development and labour market opportunities. When it comes to protection for vulnerable groups, there are significant differences found between the two societies. The duration of financial support for refugees in the settling phase differs, as well as support for single providers. Difference in health coverage also influences the overall economic situation of immigrants. More research about the integration processes for the most vulnerable groups of Somali immigrants in both societies are needed before concluding about which society provides the best opportunities for this particular immigrant group.

The differences between the two post immigration policies as described in this thesis raise questions about what is good integration. Are you integrated when you work full time, or does it take more? Do you have to know the language, and the society, to be able to take an active part in it? The

differences in policies show that the Norwegian government and the government of Minnesota have chosen different approaches to these questions, revealing their value judgements regarding integration. While the Americans prioritize labour market participation, the Norwegians emphasize language and knowledge about the society in their program. The two societies meet their immigrants with different strategies. The discussion about the Refugee Cash Assistance Program in Minnesota compared to the Introductory Program in Norway reveal different value judgements concerning integration in the two societies. But the outcome for the individuals involved can in the end be more influenced by structural factors, like current economic situation in the society and job availability, than by social welfare strategies.

Helskog's suggestion of Norway learning from America should be seen as an interesting contribution to the debate about what is considered good integration in Norway. As I have shown by exploring the integration processes of Somali immigrants, American policies cannot be adopted into the Norwegian reality to solve integration challenges here. But some of the elements from the American integration experiences should be debated and considered when trying to accommodate the particular needs of the Somali immigrants in Norway.

To meet the needs of this particular group of immigrants, the Introductory Program provides an appropriate point of departure. Considering the high percentage of the group having low level of education, and the tendency among the group to limit social interaction to other group members, more knowledge about language and the society is crucial when it comes to integration. Work placement and other forms of training for work as a part of the program is an opportunity to introduce immigrants to the labour market, and should be used actively. In the Introductory Programme the principle of individual adjustment can be used actively, and for the Somali immigrants who express interest the program can include elements of knowledge and training regarding entrepreneurship in Norway. Work placement in small private businesses are also very relevant for the group, as learning from others experience can help potential business owners avoid some of the pitfalls described from the Somali enclave in Minneapolis. Volunteer organizations like the Red Cross or Norwegian People's Aid can be utilized more by the local municipalities in the work with the immigrants, within the scope of the introductory program, or as an addition, to build bridges into the main stream Norwegian society.



Helskog embraces what he describes as an American tradition to conduct self-criticism and support whistle blowers, at the same time as he criticizes lack of these factors in the Norwegian society (Helskog 2008, 171). I do not have room within this thesis to debate whether his assumptions are accurate. But applied to the case of the Somali immigrants I have discussed problems related to stigmatization in media, and discrimination on the labour market. Open debate within the field of immigration research, in the media, within the Somali community itself, and *between* these actors should contribute positively in developing strategies for meeting the challenges faced by this particular group. In the book “The immigrants’ Superpower” Helskog challenges assumptions about the American system which are common among Norwegians, and he suggests improvements of the Norwegian welfare system. In this extent I consider Helskog’s book as a positive contribution to the ongoing debate about what is considered to be successful integration.

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## Enclosure 1

### Syssetsetting av somaliere i Hammerfest

Fredag 19. mars 2010 10.50

"Alvin Vaseli" <Alvin.Vaseli@hammerfest.kommune.no>

solschulze@yahoo.no

"Caroline Vandersmissen" <Caroline.Vandersmissen@hammerfest.kommune.no>

**Fra:**

**Til:**

**Kopi:**

### Solveig Schulze

Har fått oversendt brevet ditt fra rektor Caroline Vandersmissen ved Hammerfest voksenopplæringssenter.

Jeg arbeider ved innvandrertjenesten i Hammerfest, og vi samarbeider med Hammerfest voksenopplæringssenter. Innvandrertjenesten er ansvarlig for planlegging, bosetting og oppfølging av flyktninger i Hammerfest. I denne sammenheng samarbeider vi med Voksenopplæringssenteret som er ansvarlig for norskopplæring og kvalifisering i forbindelse med introduksjonsprogrammet. I tillegg samarbeider vi med arbeidsplasser og ulike offentlige institusjoner i forbindelse med arbeidspraksis, jobb kvalifiseringer, utdanning, etc.

Når det gjelder syssetsettingsprosenten for somaliere i Hammerfest, har det sikkert ulike årsaker, men i hovedtrekk skyldes det følgende:

- I forbindelse med utbygginga av Snøhvitalegget på Melkøya, var det et meget stort behov for arbeidskraft, også for arbeidskraft uten særskilt utdanning. På Melkøya bodde flere tusen arbeidere under utbyggingen som ble avsluttet for cirka to år siden, og somaliene ble etter hvert en stor andel av renholderne på disse brakkeanleggene. Mange av disse var bosatt i Hammerfest, men veldig mange somaliere kom også fra andre kommuner både nord og sør i landet. Dette var somaliere som var veldig motivert for å arbeide/ha egen inntekt.
- Hammerfest er også en kommune med en del fiskeindustri. Etter etableringen av Snøhvitalegget, førte dette til økt konkurranse om arbeidskraften, og dette førte også til at det ble lettere for somaliere å få innpass og arbeid som fiskeindustriarbeidere.
- Utbygginga av Snøhvitalegget og fiskeindustriens behov for arbeidskraft, førte også til at andre arbeidsplasser fikk problemer med å rekruttere arbeidskraft, særlig innenfor yrker som ikke krevde spesiell utdanning. Dette bidro også til at mange somaliere fikk seg arbeid som renholdere og assistenter, både innenfor privat og offentlig virksomhet.
- Innvandrertjenesten og Voksenopplæringssenteret har som sagt hatt hovedansvaret for bosetting, oppfølging, språkopplæring og introduksjonsprogram for bosatte flyktninger. Mange av flyktningene har vært veldig fokusert på arbeid, og i denne sammenheng har vi hatt utstrakt samarbeid med privat og offentlig arbeidsliv, noe som også har bidratt til at syssetsettinga av flyktninger har vært relativ stor i Hammerfest, også for somaliere.
- For øvrig kan nevnes at Hammerfest er en by med lang innvandrerhistorie, og på 1970/80-tallet var en stor andel av fiskeindustriarbeiderne fra Sri Lanka. Dessuten har kommunen bosatt flyktninger i over tjue år, og har i løpet av denne tiden opparbeidet seg erfaringer.
- Det er kanskje også en fordel at byen er relativ liten og tett, med cirka 9500 innbyggere.

Det gjør at både offentlige institusjoner har bedre oversikt og kontakt med denne gruppen, og terskelen for innvandrere og flyktninger å komme i kontakt med innvandrertjeneste, NAV, Voksenopplæringscenteret og arbeidsplasser er lavere enn i større byer.

I dag er sysselsettingssituasjonen for somaliere i Hammerfest annerledes enn for noen år siden.

- Etter at Snøhvitalegget ble ferdig utbygd for et par år siden, har behovet for renholdere og kjøkken/kantinemedarbeidere blitt betraktelig mindre. Mange av somaliene som kom hit fra andre kommuner har reist, og mange av disse ble tilbudt jobber ved andre større utbyggingsanlegg hvor det var behov for renholdere og annen arbeidskraft uten særskilt utdanning. Men flertallet av de som i dag arbeider ved Snøhvitalegget som renholdere, etc, er også i dag somaliere.
- Fiskeindustrien har de siste år satset på å rekruttere arbeidskraft gjennom utleiefirma, og får i dag mye arbeidskraft fra østeuropeiske land. Dette har ført til at det er langt mer vanskelig for flyktninger/somaliere å få innpass her.
- Andre offentlige institusjoner, så som NAV, har de siste årene fått større fokus mot flyktninger/somaliere som har problemer med å komme inn på det ordinære arbeidsmarkedet, og fått flere av disse inn på ulike tilrettelagte sysselsettingstiltak.
- For øvrig kan nevnes at mange av de somaliske kvinnene som etter hvert har blitt bosatt her, særskilt i forbindelse med familiegjenforeninger, også har vært meget fokusert på å lære seg norsk, få utdanning og arbeid. Dette har ført til at en relativ stor andel av disse kvinnene er under utdanning og eller i arbeid, da særskilt innenfor pleie/omsorg og renhold.
- Det at det har blitt vanskeligere for flyktninger/innvandrere uten særskilt utdanning å få arbeid i byen, har også ført til at flere har fått større fokus mot utdanning. Voksenopplæringscenteret har også satt i gang/har planer om flere arbeidsrettede kurs, innenfor pleie/omsorg og barnehage, noe som er med å bidra til at flyktninger (også somaliere) lettere får tilgang til arbeid og praksiserfaring innenfor flere typer sektorer. Dette er også med å motivere dem til videre utdanning, og i dag ser man at både somaliske kvinner og ungdommer prioriterer utdanning.

For øvrig har vi ingen statistikker eller undersøkelser som har gått i dybden for å finne ut hvorfor somaliere/flyktninger har hatt relativ høy sysselsettingsprosent i Hammerfest, og det hadde kanskje vært en ide å finne ut litt mer hvordan/hvorfor. Og det hadde også vært interessant å finne ut hvor det blir av de mange somaliene som har fått sin første arbeidserfaring ved Snøhvitaleggets utbyggingsfase, og om dette har bidratt til at de i dag fremdeles er i arbeid eller utdanning andre steder. For øvrig er det kanskje også interessant å finne ut om økt sysselsetting av denne gruppen har ført til bedre integrering i lokalsamfunnet eller ikke?

Vel, dette blir som sagt bare en liten overflatisk analyse og svar på dine spørsmål. Kanskje det hadde vært en idé å ta seg en tur nordover, og dybdeintervjue et utvalg av den gruppen som du skriver masteroppgave om?

Vennlig hilsen

Alvin Vaséli

(innvandrerveileder) Tlf 90 12 80 31



**Fra:** Solveig Schulze [mailto:solschulze@yahoo.no]

**Sendt:** to 18.03.2010 15:48

**Til:** Post voksenopplærings senteret

**Emne:** sysselsetting av somaliere

Hei dere på voksenopplæringen i Hammerfest!

Jeg er en student ved høghskolen i Oslo, og skriver en masteroppgave om integrering av somaliere i Norge og Minnesota, THE US. I den forbindelse er jeg interessert i å høre fra noen som vet mer om sysselsetting av Somaliere i Hammerfest: Statistisk sentralbyrå har målt at 82 % er i jobb i Hammerfest. Siden dette statistisk sett er veldig unikt for denne gruppen, vil jeg gjerne finne ut mer om hvilke type jobber de har fått i kommunen. Særlig er jeg interessert i om det er jobber som krever utdanning eller ikke, og type næring. Og selvfølgelig hadde det vært spennende å høre om dere har noen teori om hvorfor Somalierne i kommunen har så høy sysselsettingsprosent i forhold til i andre norske kommuner.

Det hadde vært veldig fint å komme i kontakt med noen hos dere som vet mer om dette! håper dere kan hjelpe meg med saken. På forhånd takk.

vennlig hilsen Solveig Schulze,

mailadr <http://no.mc241.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=solschulze@yahoo.no>

tlf 92021060

## Enclosure 2

### RE: Demography helpline

Mandag 26. april 2010 19.01

**Fra:**

"Ronningen, Barbara (ADM)" <Barbara.Ronningen@state.mn.us>

**Til:**

"Solveig Schulze" <solschulze@yahoo.no>

**Melding inneholder vedlegg**

7 filer (109KB)

As I told you last week, I don't have any current information. I've attached all the files I have on Somalis from the 2000 Census. Unfortunately, it will be many years before this information is available again.

BJR

Have you returned your Census form?

Barbara J Ronningen  
Minnesota State Demographic Center  
www.demography.state.mn.us  
651-201-2473  
Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.

-----Original Message-----

From: Solveig Schulze [mailto:<http://no.mc241.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=solschulze@yahoo.no>]  
Sent: Friday, April 23, 2010 4:55 AM  
To: Ronningen, Barbara (ADM)  
Subject: RE: Demography helpline

Hi

thank you so much for answering my request so quickly. Your answer was very helpful. It is a challenge for me that the statistics are from 2000 only, when attempting to do a comparison. Regarding census 2010, do you know when results are expected to be published? 2011?

I also wonder if you have detailed statistics about the following:

female householders with own children

incl. in labour force and employment rates for women and men separately, and for population over 20 or 25 years?

thank you again for your help, and for the tip about the researcher, I will try to get in touch with her.

Solveig Schulze,  
Oslo University college

--- Den ons 2010-04-21 skrev Ronningen, Barbara (ADM)  
<<http://no.mc241.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=Barbara.Ronningen@state.mn.us>>:

> Fra: Ronningen, Barbara (ADM)  
> <<http://no.mc241.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=Barbara.Ronningen@state.mn.us>>  
> Emne: RE: Demography helpline

> Til: "<http://no.mc241.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=solschulze@yahoo.no>"  
 <<http://no.mc241.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=solschulze@yahoo.no>>  
 > Dato: Onsdag 21. april 2010 16.42  
 > I have attached a file using data  
 > from the 2000 Census. That data is not available for any  
 > year since 2000.  
 >  
 > In 2008, the American Community Survey estimated that there  
 > were 26,895 Somalis in Minnesota with a margin of error of  
 > 3,206. Generally, I use the upper bound of the estimate in  
 > this data for immigrant populations. And in fact, I think  
 > that is even too low - my estimate is approx 45,000 with a  
 > margin of error of 5,000. In the same year, there were 1,549  
 > births to mothers born in Somalia. In the school year  
 > completed in June 2009, 10,639 children in Minnesota schools  
 > spoke Somali at home.  
 >  
 > Somalis continue to come to Minnesota, and the most recent  
 > data for Minnesota (2009 - not included in the attached .csv  
 > file) shows 4,173 arrived.  
 >  
 > If you have not already done so, you may want to contact  
 > Cawa Abdi (<http://no.mc241.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=cabdi@umn.edu>) at  
 > the University of Minnesota. Her doctoral research focused  
 > on Somalis and their adjustment to Minnesota.  
 >  
 > I hope this helps. Please let me know if you need further  
 > assistance  
 > BJR  
 >  
 >  
 > Have you returned your Census form?  
 >  
 >  
 > Barbara J Ronningen  
 > Minnesota State Demographic Center  
 > [www.demography.state.mn.us](http://www.demography.state.mn.us)  
 > 651-201-2473  
 > Please consider the environment before printing this  
 > e-mail.  
 >  
 >  
 >  
 > -----Original Message-----  
 > From: <http://no.mc241.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=apache@lmic.state.mn.us>  
 > [<mailto:http://no.mc241.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=apache@lmic.state.mn.us>]  
 >  
 > Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 7:33 AM  
 > To: Demography Helpline (ADM)  
 > Subject: Demography helpline  
 >  
 > Demography helpline  
 >  
 > name: Solveig Schulze  
 > email\_address: <http://no.mc241.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=solschulze@yahoo.no>  
 > organization: Oslo University College

> address:  
> city: Oslo, Norway  
> state:  
> postal\_code:  
> phone\_number:  
> extension:  
> fax:  
> question\_or\_comment: Hi  
>  
> I am a master student at Oslo University College in Norway.  
> I am writing my masters thesis about integration of Somali  
> Immigrants in Norway compared to Minnesota. Related to this  
> topic, I would appreciate your help in accessing some  
> updated statistics about the Somali immigrant population in  
> Minnesota. Any information you might have is of interest to  
> me: population estimates, employment rates, age, education,  
> family characteristics and more.  
>  
>  
>  
> I have not been able to find any data about this particular  
> group by searching your website.  
>  
>  
>  
> I am not able to open the file "Immigrants to Minnesota by  
> region and selected country of birth" in a readable format.  
>  
>  
>  
>  
> I appreciate your help  
>  
>  
>  
> thank you  
>  
>  
>  
> from Solveig Schulze  
> Submit: Submit  
> form: Demography helpline  
> recipient: [http://no.mc241.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=demography.helpline@state.mn.us](mailto:mc241@mail.yahoo.com)  
> redirect: <http://www.demography.state.mn.us/>  
>

